

**Mid-Pacific Region  
Sacramento, CA**

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## **Two Mid-Pacific Region Employees Receive Department of the Interior Valor Awards for Saving Lives**

The Bureau of Reclamation announces that Mr. André King Leamons and Mr. Dennis Lee Schuenemann have each been awarded the prestigious Department of the Interior Valor Award. The presentations were made by Acting Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Departmental Honor Awards Convocation held in the Main Interior Building in Washington, DC on Thursday, May 4, 2006.

Leamons was honored for saving a life on June 25, 2005, in Sacramento, California. About 10 a.m., Leamons was driving behind a vehicle on Walerga Road that ran into a metal light pole and caught on fire. The driver was unconscious, the car doors were locked, and the windows were rolled up. André had a bystander call 911 while he and another man broke a window. Leamons reached into the vehicle, turned off the ignition, and unlocked the doors. After he was able to get the jammed driver's door opened, Leamons entered the burning car, removed the unconscious man, carried him to a safe distance, and treated him for shock until the fire department arrived. Leamons' citation reads: "For his selfless, heroic actions, quick thinking, and response to a situation that saved the life of a fellow citizen, Andre' K. Leamons is granted the Valor Award of the Department of the Interior."

Leamons was born May 5, 1952, in Los Angeles, California. He lived in Fresno before moving to Medford, Oregon, where he graduated from high school. Shortly after graduation in 1970, he joined the U.S. Air Force, serving in several Wings and Major Commands, to include the 41<sup>st</sup> Rescue Weather and Reconnaissance Wing. He eventually became the first Superintendent of Aircrew Life Support for Headquarters, Air Rescue Service. A highly decorated Master Sergeant credited with saving several lives, Leamons retired in 1992 but found a new way to help others when he went to work for the Small Business Administration, Disaster Assistance, in 1997. Leamons joined Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region in 2002 as a Supply Technician in the Administrative Management Office in Sacramento. He continued helping others recently when he deployed to the Gulf States to assist victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Leamons is a lifetime member of the Air Force Sergeants Association and Disabled American Veterans. He is an ordained minister who holds the title of Reverend Doctor, and he continues to perform weddings. Leamons has two sons, André II and Andrew, and one granddaughter, Jade Elizabeth. He is engaged to Anita Velarde-Jennings.

Schuenemann was honored for saving lives on May 2, 2005, on California's Interstate 5. About 5:30 a.m. as he was driving behind an SUV near Williams, Schuenemann watched as the vehicle drifted off the road, went airborne, landed on top of a fence, flipped, and disappeared. It was dark, and tall brush surrounded the area, so Schuenemann couldn't see the car from the road. He called 911 and began searching for the vehicle, which entailed making his way through the brush, climbing over the barbed-wire fence, and making it down a 6-foot slope to find the SUV upside down and underwater in an irrigation ditch. Schuenemann waded into the 3½-foot-deep, cold, swift-moving water. He could

hear moaning in the SUV, but the badly damaged doors were jammed shut, so he climbed back up to the road to guide rescuers to the site. Schuenemann saved lives by getting help to arrive promptly; otherwise the accident certainly would not have been discovered in time. Schuenemann's citation reads: "For his courage, quick response, and the heroic actions carried out in this life-saving incident, Dennis L. Schuenemann is granted the Valor Award of the Department of the Interior."

The 51-year-old Schuenemann was born in Ingelwood, California. He lives in Orland with his wife, Ann Caroline, and he is a Construction Inspector for the Mid-Pacific Regional Construction Office located in Willows, California. His prior positions have included Lab Technician, Inspector, and Draftsman/Civil Designer. Schuenemann's hobbies include building and flying radio-controlled aircraft and learning to better play his 6-string electric guitar.

For additional information or assistance with the photographs, please contact Ms. Janet Sierzputowski, Public Affairs, at 916-978-5112 or [jsierzputowski@mp.usbr.gov](mailto:jsierzputowski@mp.usbr.gov).

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André Leamons (l) and Dennis Schuenemann



Acting Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett with Dennis Schuenemann (l) and André Leamons (r).

